

changes as may be appropriate to reflect the actions of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. TSONGAS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Reserving my right to object, I am just not fully aware of this. I understand that a very important vote that was taken yesterday has been negated and that there is some objection to correcting the situation, which was a clerical error, apparently, by unanimous consent on our side.

I am just wondering where that stands in comparison to the unanimous consent objections that were being expected of us today.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I withdraw my unanimous consent request.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The request is withdrawn.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 5813. An act to amend Public Law 110-196 to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 beyond April 18, 2008.

ON THE PASSING OF LOU COSTANTINO

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the House, we have some extraordinary people who work for us. At times this is a very stressful job. They remain even-tempered. They remain gentle and kind and good humored. We have lost one of those just recently. Maybe you did not know his name, but you saw him, usually through the center door, or sometimes other doors. His name was Lou Costantino.

As a member of the House security team for over 28 years, Lou Costantino has been a fixture at the House Chamber's front door and was beloved by Members and staff who were greeted by him every day. I never failed to come through that door that he did not have a kind and gentle world.

He was a "purveyor of pork," if you will. He loved sausage, and he allowed some of us to share in that sausage.

I am very sad to report to all of you that Lou died of a heart attack last Saturday. He was young, 71 years of age. Many of you will remember Lou for the homemade sausage he made for his friends and colleagues every day.

We will miss Lou. He made this institution a better place.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

I would ask you therefore to join me in a moment of silence in remembrance

of a part of this institution who will be sorely missed, Lou Costantino.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Mr. BLUNT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, before I yield to my friend from Maryland, I would like to join him in his comments regarding Lou Costantino, who served us well and ably for a long time.

Lou Costantino was always proud of his job, he was proud of his family and proud of our country. To his wife, Doris; his daughter, Edie; and to his son, Louis, Jr., who we got relatively regular reports on, I am sure that the sympathy of the House goes out to them.

Madam Speaker, I yield to my friend from Maryland, the majority leader, for information about next week's schedule.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I thank him for his words about Lou Costantino. All of us will miss Lou. He was a wonderful, good, human being who loved this institution and showed great affection to all of our Members.

On Monday, the House is not in session. On Tuesday, the House will meet at 12:30 p.m. for morning hour and 2 p.m. for legislative business. On Wednesday and Thursday, the House will meet at 10 a.m. for legislative business. On Friday, no votes are expected in the House.

We will consider several bills under suspension of the rules, including an important bill from the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, H.R. 5712, Close the Contractor Fraud Loop-hole Act. A final list of suspension bills will be announced by the close of business tomorrow.

In addition, Mr. Whip, we will consider H.R. 5819, a bill to improve the Small Business Innovation Research Program and the Small Business Technology Transfer Program, and H.R. 2830, the Coast Guard authorization bill.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

I have a couple of inquiries about other legislation. The 1974 Budget Act set a budget deadline of April 15. I am well aware that the Congress has seldom met that deadline, I think maybe four times. The latest three were in 1999, 2001 and 2003. But with that deadline in mind, I wonder if the gentleman has any sense when a budget might be on the floor.

I would yield.

□ 1415

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

My hope is sooner rather than later. However, as the gentleman knows, we are having, as is so often the case, difficulty reaching agreement with the Senate, mainly because the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee has a

very close vote structure there, as you know, and so he is trying to figure out the votes in the Senate on a budget.

As is too often the case, one of the issues is whether we pay for things that we are doing. The House feels strongly about that issue, and I think the chairman of the Budget Committee in the Senate feels strongly about that issue, but he is not sure that he can get the votes. That is the discussion. There is some discrepancy, not much, between the figures, and we are hopeful that we can get a budget conference committee done. As soon as a conference committee is done, we will report it to the floor. If that is next week, it will be on the floor next week.

I am in regular communication with Mr. SPRATT, the chairman of the Budget Committee, and he is working at it.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that information. Of course it is a challenge, but it is a challenge that we need to meet in some way usually before we can move with the appropriations process. But on appropriations on the supplemental, there were conflicting reports this week that there might be a supplemental for Afghanistan and another supplemental for Iraq, and then there were reports that no, the committee would report out one supplemental bill. I am wondering if the gentleman knows whether there will be one or two bills, and are we still anticipating a markup of that bill next week and then floor action following next week?

I yield.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I still anticipate that. With reference to the gentleman's question regarding the number of bills, based upon the comments of Mr. MURTHA, I have not talked to him personally but that have been reported, it is my understanding that he is thinking of one bill, not both an Afghanistan and an Iraq.

The problem is while there is, I think, pretty universal support for the effort in Afghanistan as being critical to our fight on terrorism, there is more disagreement on the Iraq component and what we ought to be doing there. But the way the budget is structured, it would be very difficult to consider them discretely, Afghanistan and Iraq. So it is my understanding that Mr. MURTHA has recommended and intends to pursue it as one bill.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that. That bill needs to be out of the way, along with the budget, before we can get on with the other appropriating process. And thinking about that appropriations calendar, I know that the majority leader was quoted last week as saying that it is likely we won't have a lame duck session, a post-election session this year. I wonder if you can comment on that a little more. I know privately we have discussed this, but I saw you in print suggesting that we might not be back after the election. I am wondering what your thoughts are on that.

Mr. HOYER. Those are my thoughts; my thoughts and my hope. I think that lame duck sessions, in my experience, have not been particularly productive, particularly when you are going to have a change of administration. Whether it is Senator MCCAIN, Senator CLINTON or Senator OBAMA, we are going to have a change of administration. I expressed it as a hope, and we are going to work toward not having a lame duck session.

Let me go back and answer your question. I think we had a week delay on the supplemental, and I think the week of May 5 is the week we are looking at for the supplemental. As you know, I said the last week in April, the first week in May. That is the first full week in May, so I guess I am still accurate. We are on for that week hopefully on the supplemental, which will be timely in accomplishing the objective of getting dollars in time before the depletion of the funds that have already been appropriated.

With respect to the appropriations process, obviously I will be discussing with Mr. OBEY and with Mr. SPRATT, if we fail to pass a budget, we have to give the Appropriations Committee a figure to mark to. My thought would be that we will do as we have done in years past, deem that the House budget will be the numbers to which they will mark. But we have not made that decision at this point in time.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that.

On the idea on a congressional year that will end before the election, I know last week we voted in an unusual way to put off the vote on the Colombia trade agreement, and I suppose that could mean to put it off indefinitely. Without a lame duck session, and that is one of the times when it was thought that we might get back to those trade bills. I'm not aware of any real discussion that has gone on this week on this Colombia agreement. I hope we are continuing to look for a way to get that important bill done.

I yield to my friend.

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The Speaker has focused on, as I think she has been quoted in the press as saying, we are still looking at TAA and discussing that with the administration. TAA, trade adjustment assistance, we think that is very important. There have been some positive discussions and indications from the administration. In addition, I know the Speaker has been discussing additional items with the leadership in the House and with Mr. REID, and I think as well with the White House. So I think discussions are ongoing. The Speaker has made it very clear that the action taken from her perception, certainly from my perception, was not the death knell of Colombia. I know that some have interpreted it that way, but I don't think that the Speaker or I interpreted it that way.

Mr. BLUNT. I hope we are continuing that.

Also, we are now entering the third month since the expiration of the Protect America Act. I know you and I were in a meeting a week or 10 days ago on this, and I still don't see any scheduled discussion of legislation on the floor that brings us back to that whole issue of foreign intelligence surveillance, and I hope we are moving toward a conclusion of that important issue.

I would yield.

Mr. HOYER. As you know because we have had an opportunity to discuss it, I have essentially been coordinating this issue on our side with Mr. REYES and Mr. CONYERS, and also working with Mr. ROCKEFELLER. And you and I had a meeting with Senator BOND, the ranking member on the Republican side.

I am hopeful that we can have a proposition passed through the House and hopefully by the Senate by the Memorial Day break. That is my time frame. I am working toward that. I have meetings tomorrow with respect to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. I am going to have meetings this afternoon, and I had meetings yesterday. I am giving it a lot of attention, with others as well. As you know, we met briefly. I would reiterate to you that when I have some better fix on where I think the Senate is willing to go or where we are willing to go and where we can reach agreement, I want to discuss it with you because I am hopeful that we can work together to try to make that happen.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman. I think every day matters in this regard, and certainly going home for another work period at home without a conclusion here would be the wrong thing for us to do. I hope we can meet your goal and hopefully meet it earlier than the last day or two that we are here before the Memorial Day break.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman would yield, I share that hope. Again, I share the conviction, which I have expressed on numerous occasions, that the law that currently exists to my understanding, and when I say currently exists, and the authorizations that were given under the Protect America Act, are in place and in fact are continuing to provide opportunities to intercept those communications that the administration and the intelligence community feel are necessary to focus on. Having said that, we are trying, I'm trying to move ahead as quickly as we can come to agreement.

Mr. BLUNT. I want to say in response that I am not quite as confident, and maybe you're not confident either, that law doesn't meet all of the circumstances that occur. And even if it does, that law reaches an anniversary of those particular orders August 1. Again, coming back after Memorial Day, we are suddenly under a situation where even those things that we currently believe are covered, we will begin to have a problem in them expiring. And certainly the things that are

not covered, there is no easy way in my view, which may be different than yours, there is no easy way to begin to listen to a new set of conversations that we just determined need to be listened to. That is what that whole debate is about. We don't need to have that debate here. But I have pledged to do everything that I can to bring this to a conclusion.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman would yield, I want to thank the gentleman because I believe he is absolutely sincere in that effort. He and I have had an opportunity to have discussions. We are going to continue those over the coming days, and hopefully we can get this done sooner rather than later. The chairman of the Judiciary Committee and the chairman of the Intelligence Committee have both expressed that objective.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman.

--- HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. HOYER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Maryland?

There was no objection.

--- HOUSING CRISIS

(Mr. HALL of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HALL of New York. Madam Speaker, we are in a housing crisis in the United States, yet the Bush administration seems determined to ignore it.

Losing your home has a deep economic and emotional impact that can last for years. When the mortgage crisis broadens as wide as it has, entire communities, not just individuals, face dire consequences for the future.

In the Hudson Valley of New York, we have been especially hard hit. Over the last 3 months, foreclosures in Westchester County were up almost 40 percent from last year, and they've more than tripled since 2005. Putnam County, also in my district, has the single highest foreclosure rate of any county in New York State.

This crisis demands bold action. This Congress has already expanded the Federal loan limits to make Federal protections available to more home buyers, now we need to extend these Federal guarantees to more homeowners in need. This Congress will not only protect institutions like Bear Stearns, but will also protect American families who remain at great risk.

□ 1430

--- WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1